



## OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Marc Elrich  
*County Executive*

Tiffany Ward  
*Director*

### MEMORANDUM

May 9, 2022

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director  
Office of Management and Budget

cc: Gabe Albornoz, President  
County Council

From: Tiffany Ward, Director  
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) for Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #22-69  
Senator Amoss Fire and Rescue Services Grant

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that supplemental appropriation #22-69 Senator Amoss Fire and Rescue Services Grant does not advance racial equity and social justice in the County, as there is no evidence of a process or distribution of goods that considers racial and other disproportionalities in fire and emergency medical risk.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #22-69 is to utilize funding available under the Senator Amoss Grant to purchase or rehabilitate apparatus, capital equipment, or renovate facilities used to house apparatus. The goal of this funding source is to ensure the continuity of service and financial viability of volunteer fire, rescue, and ambulance companies in the state of Maryland.

Publicly available information indicates that counties distribute funds to Volunteer Fire and Rescue Services (VFRAS) based on minimum qualifications under Section 8-103 of the Public Safety Code of Maryland<sup>1</sup>. Once the minimum requirements are met, the county can distribute funding based on need<sup>2</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> Md. Code, Pub. Safety Section 8-103. Available at: <https://casetext.com/statute/code-of-maryland/article-public-safety/title-8-fire-and-rescue-funds/subtitle-1-senator-william-h-amoss-fire-rescue-and-ambulance-fund/section-8-103-allocation-and-distribution-of-money>

<sup>2</sup> FY 2022. Senator William H. Amoss Instructions for County Finance Offices. Available at: <https://www.alleganygov.org/DocumentCenter/View/5469/FY22-AMOSS-INSTRUCTIONS>

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- the failure to meet minimum standards established by the county or the Maryland State Firemen's Association;
- the existence or potential existence of an emergency situation as described in § 8-203<sup>3</sup> of this title; and
- the age and condition of existing facilities and equipment.

Safety Code of Maryland<sup>4</sup>. Once the minimum requirements are met, the county can distribute funding based on need<sup>5</sup>:

- the failure to meet minimum standards established by the county or the Maryland State Firemen's Association;
- the existence or potential existence of an emergency situation as described in § 8-203<sup>6</sup> of this title;
- the age and condition of existing facilities and equipment;
- the lack of availability of mutual aid;
- any service problems associated with demographic conditions;
- a company's inability to raise money to pay for an item; and
- any other relevant factors.

Provisions in the code give county's leeway in determining need based on procedures the county uses to adopt its budget<sup>7</sup>.

Typically, to assess the extent to which a supplemental appropriation like this advances racial equity and social justice in the County, ORESJ would look at the distribution of goods purchased and whether the distribution accounted for racial and other inequities shaping fire safety risk (and other emergency health outcomes) in the County.

In addition, it is also valuable to apply a racial equity lens to the policies or process used to determine which items were purchased and their distribution. Both types of analyses—distribution and policy—are useful for determining whether this supplemental appropriation is likely to advance racial equity and social justice, as racial equity is both a process and an outcome<sup>8</sup>.

At the time of this analysis, information about the distribution of goods, or the process of determining distribution, were not available. ORESJ is therefore challenged in its ability to

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<sup>3</sup> Md. Code, Pub. Safety Section 8-103.

<sup>4</sup> Md. Code, Pub. Safety Section 8-103. Available at: <https://casetext.com/statute/code-of-maryland/article-public-safety/title-8-fire-and-rescue-funds/subtitle-1-senator-william-h-amoss-fire-rescue-and-ambulance-fund/section-8-103-allocation-and-distribution-of-money>

<sup>5</sup> FY 2022. Senator William H. Amoss Instructions for County Finance Offices. Available at: <https://www.alleganygov.org/DocumentCenter/View/5469/FY22-AMOSS-INSTRUCTIONS>

<sup>6</sup> Md. Code, Pub. Safety Section 8-103.

<sup>7</sup> Md. Code, Pub. Safety Section 8-103.

<sup>8</sup> "What is Racial Equity?" Race Forward. Available at: <https://www.raceforward.org/about/what-is-racial-equity>

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assess potential racial equity impacts of this grant funding. In the research and preparation of this REIA, ORESJ observed the following about the link between racial and other inequities and fire safety risk and emergency health outcomes:

Workforce diversity can reduce communication barriers and inequalities in healthcare delivery, especially when there are time pressures or incomplete information (as is the often the case in emergency health settings). Yet one ten-year study (2008-2017 in the US) showed that, among paramedics and EMT, there is persistent pattern of underrepresentation of women and people of color<sup>9</sup>.

In a 2019, The Federal Emergency Management Agency US Fire Administration reported that fire risk is influenced by age, geographic location, gender, and race. For example, African Americans experience a disproportionate percentage of fire deaths in the US. In 2017, African Americans had a 40% greater risk of dying in a fire than the general population; African Americans make up 13% of the US population but 19% of fire deaths in the US<sup>10</sup>.

A recent article about largescale apartment fires in Philadelphia and New York raised the legacy of redlining as a source of housing instability that disproportionately forces Black people into rental units with maintenance issues that place them at higher risk for fire deaths and lead poisoning<sup>11</sup>.

The brief review of this evidence suggests that, if an intentional equity lens is applied, investments in fire and rescue equipment, operations, and planning could reduce racial and other disparities in adverse fire and health outcomes. Based on available information, the resources provided under this supplemental appropriation do not apply such a lens.

cc: Ken Hartman, Director, Office of Strategic Partnership, Office of the County Executive  
Scott Goldstein, Director, Fire and Rescue Services

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<sup>9</sup> Remle P. Crowe, William Krebs, Rebecca E. Cash, Madison K. Rivard, Erin W. Lincoln & Ashish R. Panchal (2020) Females and Minority Racial/Ethnic Groups Remain Underrepresented in Emergency Medical Services: A Ten-Year Assessment, 2008–2017, *Prehospital Emergency Care*, 24:2, 180-187, DOI: 10.1080/10903127.2019.1634167. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10903127.2019.1634167?journalCode=ipeec20> ORESJ reviewed the abstract of this article.

<sup>10</sup> US Federal Emergency Management Agency. Topical Fire Report Series. September 2019. Volume 20, Issue 3. Available at: <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/statistics/v20i3.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Char Adams. NBC News. “‘Tenants have no choice’: Racism in urban planning fuels high rate of Black fire deaths”. January 12, 2022. Available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/tenants-no-choice-racism-urban-planning-fuels-high-rate-black-fire-dea-rcna11986>